

MEMBER

- Public Safety Committee
- Public Works Committee
- Anti-Graffiti Policy Committee



ROBERT G. DONOVAN

Alderman, 8th District

Body cameras = more politics than policing

**Statement from Alderman Bob Donovan
August 31, 2015**

The mayor is proposing to outfit each and every uniformed Milwaukee police patrol officer with a body camera, to the tune of more than \$800,000 in the 2016 city budget.

Now I have no problem with body cameras for our officers, but I am very concerned that we're jumping the gun here. There is no defined department policy on the use of the cameras, yet the mayor and Chief Flynn are putting forth what they're calling the most aggressive police body camera initiative in the nation.

In my mind, this is a wrong-headed approach that may not accomplish what they hope it will. Rushing implementation of such an important new piece of department equipment and the policy to administer it just makes no sense.

I would proceed first with a sensible policy, and then try the body cameras out on a smaller certain number of patrol officers to see how they work. You might call it a "pilot project" approach.

Also, we're talking about handing off at least part of this project to the MPD's information technology division – the same people who lost untold hours of video interviews with suspects and witnesses in very serious cases. Not a good idea!

This almost reminds me of how quickly we jumped into the OpenSky digital radio communications system. The OpenSky system had a ton of problems after it was rolled out, including ones that frankly compromised officer safety in some situations, in my opinion.

-More-

I think we would do well to roll out the body cameras in a smart, deliberate fashion to see how they are working – instead of going hog wild and issuing them in a rush to all patrol officers.

The mayor also announced “100 new police officers” will be in his 2016 budget, and that he’ll eliminate the mandatory three furlough days for each officer (something he’s had in place, for some asinine reason, for the past few years).

I have been calling for adding hundreds of officers to make up for our officer vacancies for years, and the administration has said “no.” I believe we would not be seeing the record homicide rate and rampant crime situation in Milwaukee had the mayor had the gumption to do the right thing and add those hundreds of officers.

The 100 new officers are also not really 100, because the mayor is double counting the 35 officer recruits who will begin at the academy in December and graduate next year. So it’s really 65 “new officers,” and because of retirements, these new officers will basically keep the department at a flat staffing level. In effect, this means no net gain in getting the officers we need so badly on the street.

And eliminating the furlough days? Yes, thank you, Mr. Mayor, for doing the right thing, finally!

Those furlough days were stupid beyond words, as they ended up cutting thousands of hours of patrol time from city neighborhoods and giving the bad guys more room to maneuver.

Well done mayor, well done.

-30-